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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000908

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: RAB CHIEF COMMITTED TO IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS
PERFORMANCE

REF: DHAKA 824 - RAB BENCHMARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Classified By: CDA a.i. Nicholas Dean. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

Summary

1. (C) Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) Director General Hassan Mahmood Khandker outlined to Poloff RAB procedures for reviewing incidents involving the use of deadly force, discussed the recently completed U.S. Marshals visit, and asked for USG sponsored training. The DG also discussed the Government of Bangladesh's response to increased criminal and extremist activity in the south-southwest region of Bangladesh. To achieve U.S. counter-terrorism (CT) goals in Bangladesh and beyond, we need to engage the RAB, Bangladesh's lead CT organization, by taking advantage of the goodwill created with the Marshals' visit to promote human rights reform and increase transparency. The UK is also sponsoring a series of technical training classes to supplement human rights courses for the RAB. End Summary.

RAB SOP for Reviewing Use of Force

2. (C) The RAB DG told Poloff September 3 that the RAB investigates internally each incident involving use of force. Each review takes several weeks to a couple months, depending on the complexity of the incident. A magistrate reviews the incident report to determine if the use of force was in accordance with Bangladesh's laws. The DG said that if the magistrate determined the use of force was not justified, then the RAB initiated disciplinary actions that could include cashiering and prison. DG Khandker did not have information on the number of personnel disciplined for excessive use of force although RAB has disciplined over 750 of its personnel, including referring them to courts for criminal prosecution, for various offenses since its establishment in 2004. Punishments have included suspension, dismissal, and imprisonment. The DG was clearly frustrated with the RAB's international reputation. Poloff reiterated to the DG that the United States, as well as the international community, shared concern over "crossfires" (extrajudicial killings). The DG replied that his men did not engage in crossfires. He asked, "What are my men to do when they are fired upon?" Poloff emphasized that the RAB needed to be transparent with the public about RAB operations involving deadly force and subsequent investigations into the justification of using force. Poloff also encouraged the RAB chief to proactively engage human rights NGOs and civil society, provide them a point of contact to increase transparency, share information, and clarify ongoing misperceptions.

RAB Seeks Additional Training

13. (C) DG Khandker expressed his appreciation for the recent United States Marshals' engagement with the RAB (reftel). He believed the program was a positive experience for both sides and highlighted the RAB's cooperation in sharing all information, including the case files for all alleged "crossfire" incidents. The DG said he hoped the USG would provide RAB additional training to improve its capabilities, especially in the area of forensics. (Note: The British High Commission will provide the RAB with forensic crime scene management and major incident management training, in addition to human rights training. The same technical training will be provided to law enforcement separately. End Note.)

RAB and Police Respond to Increase in Violent Crime

14. (S) Mainstream media have reported a notable increase, since December, in criminal activity, including a series of violent murders involving the beheading of at least 12 victims in the south-southwest region of Bangladesh. The RAB DG confirmed the RAB was conducting a series of operations against criminal gangs, "leftist extremists", and Jamma'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) members, which the GOB believes is trying to reconstitute itself. (Note. Bangladeshi officials frequently use "leftists" as a generic term for extremists with leftist ties to groups, such as indigenous

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terrorist organizations. The DG did not clarify the affiliations of the leftist groups he mentioned. End Note.) The RAB DG said his personnel faced stiff resistance while attempting to detain suspects and persons of interest, often resulting in firefights in which a number of RAB personnel were wounded. Nur Mohammad, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) separately confirmed to A/RSO that he had dispatched police reinforcements to the south-southwest region of Bangladesh to support the RAB. The IGP also mentioned that police had suffered injuries during recent operations there. The Home Ministry recently announced publicly that it would consider a general amnesty for extremists operating in the south-southwest if they surrendered to Bangladesh authorities.

Comment

15. (C) The RAB remains Bangladesh's lead counter-terrorism unit. Improving the RAB's effectiveness is central to achieving U.S. antiterrorism goals in Bangladesh and South Asia. The RAB DG is committed to improving the RAB's human rights performance and professionalism. Post continues to advocate for greater transparency, including publishing details of RAB personnel prosecuted for excessive use of force and other human rights violations, and for the RAB to implement a more effective review procedure. The success of the Marshals' visit highlights the opportunity to enhance our engagement with the RAB by providing expanded follow-on Marshal training to improve its human rights performance.

DEAN